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History, its Origins, and End in Context of Philosophy of Liberation

L.E. Kryshstop  , A.V. Basmanov 

RUDN University,
6, Miklukho-Maklaya St., Moscow, 117198, Russian Federation
 kryshstop-le@rudn.ru

Abstract. The article concerns history, its origins, goals, and end. The article focuses on two concepts of historical development. One is the concept of the “end of history” by Francis Fukuyama. The article’s authors consider in detail the main provisions of this concept. However, the main emphasis is on the critical reception of this concept within the framework of the philosophy of liberation (represented by Arturo Andrés Roig). Roig’s criticism reveals the Eurocentrism inherent in this concept and shows that it carries the main features inherent in the European worldview and European mentality, which is why it is initially perceived as unsuitable for the Latin American continent. The second concept of historical development analyzed in this article is the earlier concept of the “Axial Age” by K. Jaspers. This concept is often perceived as one of the most striking anti-Eurocentric concepts. At the same time, Jaspers himself is regarded as the founder of the dialogue of cultures and intercultural philosophy and a supporter of civilizational pluralism. The article consistently analyzes three aspects of this concept — the motivation for its creation (presented by Jaspers himself), the criteria for identifying historical and prehistoric cultures (and the associated identification of three centers of the axial period), and the question of the possibility of a new axial age. The article argues that Jaspers’ concept can rightly be called Eurocentric rather than anti-Eurocentric, since both in the initial motivation for creating this concept and in the process of its development and vision of the prospects for the possibility of a new axial age, Jaspers proceeds from the presuppositions characteristic of the European worldview, which is universalized by him and presented as objective and the only correct ones. Ultimately, the study shows that the fight against Eurocentrism is a logical continuation of the latter and carries all the main features of the European mentality.

Key words: end of history, axial period, postmodernism, Christianity, Eurocentrism

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Introduction

The question of history, its specificity, origins, and ultimate development goal has occupied the minds of mankind for centuries. Different civilizations have offered us a variety of descriptions of this phenomenon and its structure. Perhaps the best known is the Christian perception of history as a linear, unidirectional process with a beginning and an end. Although it is often possible to find references to an alternative version — a cyclical understanding of history — today, it is difficult to question the fact that the Christian version is the basis of our worldview and our understanding of the subject of historical sciences. The question about the origins and end of history, as well as its possible purposes, is an immediate product of the same Christian worldview, which has undergone various modifications under the influence of secularization processes. Lately, we often hear about such variety as F. Fukuyama’s conception of “the end of history,” which has both its ardent supporters (indeed, from the camp of liberal democracy, which plays the leading role in Fukuyama’s “posthistorical” worldview) and not less ardent opponents. The latter include the representatives of the philosophy of liberation, who offer a reasoned critique of this concept and reveal its ideological nature, posing as a statement of the actual state of affairs and objective and inevitable laws of historical development. In this article, we will elaborate on the main aspects of this critique and provide a broader context for the emergence and development of this problem. This will lead us to an analysis of Jaspers’ concept of the *Axial Age*, one of today’s best-known counter-Eurocentric concepts, which, on closer examination, reveals more of the features of Eurocentrism so descriptive of the European mentality rather than their opposites.

“The End of History” and the Role of the Hispanic People in the Posthistoric Era

Francis Fukuyama’s essay *The End of History?* (1989) begot a widespread controversy. Fukuyama’s constructions fell on the well-prepared cultural ground, fitting effortlessly into the context of discussions of *postmodernity* and *posthistory*. The theory of *posthistory* emerged in the 1980s. Its beginning is considered to be J.-F. Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* [1], one of the main ideas of which is the thesis that any historical concepts are “big narratives” that do not have the status of authority and functionality in the modern world. At the same time, much attention was paid to posthistory by J. Habermas, who saw the origins of the concept of *posthistory* back in the mid-20th century in the German anthropologist Arnold

Gehlen, who could have borrowed it from Hendrik de Man [2. P. 9]. The concept of *posthistory* received its final formulation in the work of L. Nithammer, “Posthistory: has history come to its end?” [3]. Its main characteristics are the rejection of the ideas of logic in the sequence of historical events, the linear development of society, and the linear concept of time. All these ideas are evaluated as metanarratives.

According to Fukuyama, the struggle for recognition has been replaced by a struggle for a more effective satisfaction of human needs in the modern world. The participants in the dispute are no longer fundamentally different *ideologies* (religions and *Weltanschauungs*, among others) but slightly different strategies of consumer society. The subject of the dispute is not moral values but economic efficiency. The antagonism of systems has been replaced by competition within one system.

Fukuyama describes the end of history as “the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” [4]. The end of history is an “unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.” In his view, the triumph of the Western idea is evident since the “total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives” to liberalism [4]. Fukuyama admits that the idea of the end of history is not original. Its most famous propagator was K. Marx. He, in turn, borrowed the concept of history as a dialectical process with a beginning, a middle, and an end from G.W.F. Hegel. According to Fukuyama, the other most significant interpreter of Hegel's idea of the end of history was Alexandre Kojève, a Russian émigré who lived in France. For Hegel himself, however, the source of this idea was the Christian view of history as a purposeful process moving toward a terrible judgment. That is why “the picture Fukuyama draws is nothing other than an *atheistic eschatology, a vulgarized Christian finalism*” [5].

A crucial point worth noting, since it is of great importance for the Latin American “philosophy of liberation,” is Fukuyama's views on the role of the Third World in the situation of the end of history. In his essay, the author “liberally” states that “at the end of history it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies <...> at that time the world will be divided into two parts: one will belong to history, the other to posthistory.” [4]. This position is Hegel's modern-sounding idea that absolute reason “was embodied by ‘world-historical’ peoples, the bearers of the universal spirit in a given era. Other peoples, however, who were on the sidelines of the victorious march of the “world spirit” ... were simply excluded from history (“non-historical peoples”). Thus, America, the New World refers to “non-historical peoples” in his concept” [6. P. 127]. Thus, well-fitting into the postmodernist paradigm reinterpretation of Hegel's ideas does not leave a decent place in the future for the Third World. The words have changed slightly, but the essence remains the same. “World Spirit” bypasses some countries, and the “Other” once again remains unrecognized, only this time without any hope of recognition in the future, because in this case, we are dealing with the “end of history”.

Fukuyama is quite frank in describing the future of countries that have not made it into posthistory: “What does the end of history mean for the field of international relations? It is clear that much of the Third World will remain on the margins of history and serve as an arena of conflict for many years to come” [4]. The territories and peoples of the Third World will thus serve as a vehicle for the problems of effectively meeting the needs of posthistorical populations.

Naturally, Roig criticizes Fukuyama’s concept. The Argentinian philosopher sees in the ideas expressed in *The End of History?* an ideological overtone designed to influence the mass consciousness and a peculiar “apology for the status quo” in many ways [7. P. 101]. It refers to the attraction by Western countries to justify their actions and the notion of the existence of historical patterns, which inevitably lead to a situation in the world where some (“bearers of the universal spirit”) live at the expense of others (those who are unlucky).

In the idea of the “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution,” Roig sees a kind of ideology. It is no longer aimed at justifying the actions of developed countries but at “disarming the minds of people and, of course, the ability of people to rebel” [8. P. 212]. Fukuyama writes that “the deep processes of history are conditioned by events occurring in consciousness, or the sphere of ideas, for in the end, it is consciousness that remakes the world in its own image” [4]. His ideas about the latter condition human behavior in the world. Likewise, these perceptions determine the direction of man’s thought activity. Fukuyama’s essay is a kind of an “official” statement about the final victory of the liberal values of the West, about the absence of any ideological alternatives. There is no more ideological confrontation, philosophy, or culture. There is only consumption; there is nothing left to think about. Fukuyama cites the fate of Kojève as an example to follow: “Considering that there was no work left for philosophers because Hegel (correctly understood) had already achieved absolute knowledge, Kojève gave up teaching in the latter part of his life to work as a bureaucrat for the European Community” [4], apparently for the benefit of the society of “bearers of the universal spirit.” According to Roig, the ideological danger of Fukuyama’s work is that it leads one to intellectual passivity.

Latin America is still a long way from the “posthistorical” stage. However, Roig does not want to see his homeland as “belonging to history” (in Fukuyama’s terminology). Moreover, the homogeneity of the future society is unacceptable to Latin American peoples, for they struggle for their spiritual independence, cultural distinctiveness, and sovereignty. The homogeneity that Fukuyama predicts for humanity shortly, represents the ideal of the Western way of life. Therefore, “such futurology is far from the cultural reality of Latin America, where there is national originality, the desire to develop one’s own culture, and where people have the willpower to improve their lives for the better” [7. P. 101]. Fukuyama’s take on the end of history brings for Latin America not only an end but also a devaluation of that history, whose value for the formation of the subject Roig defended. The

philosopher “stresses that Latin American peoples do not want to close history and that liberation remains their goal” [7. P. 101].

Roig also criticizes Lyotard’s position on the philosophical understanding of history. Lyotard believes that “this metadiscourse (philosophy) resorts explicitly to this or that grand narrative, such as the dialectic of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational subject or the worker, the growth of wealth, etc.” [1. P. 9]. Thus, philosophical comprehension of history acquires the character of a meta-narrative, i.e., “it is just a form of narrative knowledge” [1. P. 9]. But for Roig, the comprehension of Latin American history in the discourse of “philosophy of liberation” is the knowledge about “the forms of being of a certain (determinado) person concerning the historical forms of his embodiment and self-affirmation” [8. P. 109]. Even if such knowledge is a straightforward narrative, it “combines the ‘speculative narrative’ and the ‘emancipatory narrative’, especially when it is knowledge about one’s history” [7. P. 100]. An essential component of such is the representation of the historical process as a relationship of the oppressor and the oppressed. Through this, the true source of social conflict is revealed. Further on, Roig defends the importance of the philosophy of history as a practice that affirms the creative role of man in history. This is since theoretical constructions of history are always ideal and represent a kind of “utopia.” In this way, such a practice develops the imagination (*imaginacion*) and contributes to forming an active and creative historical subject [9. P. 43].

Thus, postmodernism is unacceptable to Latin America because, according to Roig, it is only a variation on the theme of modernity. Totality takes on a new form. The Western European Logos is once again trying to establish its dominance differently. The consciousness of the “Other” is recognized, and the existence of national-philosophical cultures different from the European one is allowed. However, the peoples carrying these cultures are set the status of “historical” peoples. They are automatically put in opposition to “posthistorical” peoples, carriers of the new universal spirit of consumer culture. The term to describe this spirit is homogeneity. A new ideology is proclaimed — the end of all ideologies. There is just consumption left, the regulating principle of which is “Western liberal democracy as the final form of government” [9. P. 43]. The topic of emancipation remains a vital one for Latin America. According to Roig, postmodernism cannot help answer the question of the causes of dependence nor develop a sensible project of social organization that meets the national peculiarities of the continent [9. P. 52].

Jaspers’ *Axial Age* — Anti-Eurocentrism or Eurocentrism v.2.0?

In the presented article, however, we would like to address not only the concept of the “end of history” and its critique within the philosophy of liberation but also to look back a little, looking at its potential origins, which most often escape the attention of researchers, or rather, to use a specific example to show how organic

and deeply rooted the concept of the “end of history” is in the European mentality. Fukuyama's concept is often associated with Hegel's philosophy and is perceived as its logical, though unexpected, continuation. This has its reasons, since Fukuyama directly named Hegel among his predecessors, attributing to the German philosopher the creation of the “end of history” concept, considering himself only his follower. At the same time, from the research point of view, it seems much more justified and valuable to trace less obvious and indirectly named parallels since they might unveil a deeper and more exciting worldview layer of European civilization (in particular, in the dimension of its philosophical reflection), which often, it seems, remains not fully realized by this European civilization (or, rather, by its representatives) itself. At the same time, this may be of the most significant interest today in the context of both the decolonization turn and, more broadly, the dialogue of cultures.

One such figure that deserves greater attention and we would like to further examine is Karl Jaspers, often considered today as one of the founders of the dialogue of cultures and intercultural philosophy [10] and the main representative of the struggle against Eurocentrism [10. P. 111—113; 11]. The central role here is played by his lately purposefully and actively popularized concept of the *Axial Age*. In this paper, we would like to scrutinize some aspects of this concept and try to give a critical assessment of the extent to which it is legitimate to look into this concept for signs of struggle against Eurocentrism and whether it would be more justified to see it as some modified continuation of this Eurocentrism (as well as Fukuyama's concept of “the end of history”). In this case, we will focus on three aspects of Jaspers' *Axial Age* — Jaspers' motivation for creating this concept, the division into historic and prehistoric cultures (and the related separation of the *Axial Age* centers), and the question of the possibility of a “new axis”. Let us consider each of these aspects in more detail.

Jaspers formulated the concept of the *Axial Age* in his 1948 work *The Origin and Goal of History*. However, as recent studies show [12. P. 243], Jaspers' authorship belongs, instead, only to the colorful title, while the essence of the concept was already set out in one of the works of Max Weber's brother, Alfred Weber, well known to Jaspers¹. Nevertheless, it is Jaspers who, to this day, is credited with creating the theory of the *Axial Age*. In the introduction to *The Origin and Goal of History*, Jaspers clearly articulates his intention — to find the unified axis of history. In this case, special attention is paid to the fact that Jaspers talks about the empiricism of this axis and the need to depart from the Christianized view of history (whether in Augustine's or Hegel's version), which will certainly be unacceptable to representatives of other, non-Christian cultures [13. P. 32]. However, it seems that no less attention should be paid to the deeper problem behind this beautiful counter-Europocentric facade, which is not too much hidden. First, it is undeniable that Jaspers emphasizes and stresses the need to rely on

¹ The work in question is *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie* (The History of Culture as the Sociology of Culture) (1935).

empirical material, which alone can provide us with a common ground for all civilizations, as opposed to any ideologized view of history (such as the Christian view of history). What is behind this emphasis on empiricism? What is it for? To discover a single axis of history, the unanimity of which Jaspers himself does not doubt: “When creating this scheme, I proceeded from the certainty that humanity has a common origin and a common goal” [13. P. 31]. But what is this, if not a relic of the same Christian vision model, where history is a linear process with a beginning and a goal (even if not observable to us)? And how does this confidence in the unity of the historical process and its purposefulness derive from an analysis of empirical material? We are confronted here with the same original premise, conditioned by the traditional Christian view of history, which is so deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Europeans that in the literal sense of the word, every time, it persistently and quite imperceptibly escapes philosophical reflection. It is possible to find in Jaspers even more direct statements on this subject: “All of us human beings are descended from Adam. All of us are related by kinship, created by God in His image and likeness. In the beginning, the revelation of existence was an immediate given. The fall of sin opened up the way in which knowledge and finite practice toward temporal purposes allowed us to reach clarity. At the final stage, we enter the sphere of the harmonious consonance of souls in the realm of eternal spirits, where we contemplate one another in love and boundless comprehension” [13. P. 31].

At the same time, to be fair, it is worth stating that Jaspers tries to relativize this view by resorting to Kantian transcendental idealism. Jaspers arrives at the following thesis — we cannot know what history is. However, we inevitably ascribe a specific unified goal to it: “These origins and this goal are not known to us, at any rate, in the form of reliable knowledge. They are tangible only in the flicker of multivalued symbols. Our existence is limited to them. In philosophical reflection, we try to get closer to both the origins and the goal. [...] These are all symbols, not realities. The meaning of empirically accessible world history, whether intrinsic to it or brought by it. Whether intrinsic to it or brought into it by us human beings, we can grasp it only by subordinating it to the idea of historical integrity. The empirical data we consider from the point of view of how they correspond to the idea of unity or contradict it” [13. P. 31]. On the one hand, this observation seems to immediately undermine Jaspers’ suspicions of a quasi-Christianized approach to history. On the other, a closer examination of this question reveals that none of the problematic points and weaknesses of Jaspers’ approach outlined above are removed but even aggravated. There is still not much here of a genuine reliance on empiricism, for what that empiricism is, we do not know, but we imagine it inevitably in a certain way. In addition, the view of history characteristic of European civilization here universalizes to such an extent that it is considered necessary, by virtue of which Jaspers further places it, without any further explanation, at the foundation of his concept. It is no less essential to scrutinize the process of identifying centers of the Axial Age. Jaspers identifies three such centers — in India, China, and the

Mediterranean (the zone of the Greek oecumene). It is the visible diversity of these cultures that leads to the fact that the concept of the Axial Age is widely regarded as the basis of the struggle against Eurocentrism and the beginning of the movement towards civilizational pluralism and dialogue of cultures. However, it is appropriate to make two comments. First, it is noteworthy what criteria Jaspers identifies as fundamental to the “axis of time.” It is the transition from mythological to a rational worldview (“from myth to logos”), which is accompanied by several accompanying worldview changes, such as the spiritualization of man, his awareness of his finitude, and, at the same time, his ability to transcend, awareness of his individuality and simultaneously his place in the universal, birth of speculative thinking, i.e., the appearance of an “authentic man” as we know him to this day [13. P. 33–35]. These changes are ultimately expressed in forming such phenomena of spiritual culture as philosophy, science (its rudiments), and religion (or, rather, the basis for the formation of world religions). All this becomes ultimately possible due to the reign of “logos — reasonableness — which is also associated with the sought-for universality on which each of the three activities is based, although in each of them in a different way”². Secondly, no less remarkable is also the fate that Jaspers assigns to all those cultures which have not passed into this new world, the world of new thinking and worldview. All these cultures are doomed if not to extinction (e.g., Babylon) but at least to stagnation and loss of their leading positions in the world community (e.g., Egypt).

Let’s look closely at Jaspers’ criteria for distinguishing historical civilizations. They all appear to be a direct product of the Greek culture perceived through the prism of its subsequent modification by the Europeans. The priority of the universal, the exaltation of the rational (logos) as something more developed in comparison with the unreasonable (mythological), finitude as an essential characteristic of man, and the need to realize transcendence for full spiritual development, connecting the authenticity of human existence with its spiritualization — all these are the values of the same Christianized European civilization, with which Jaspers seems to try to polemicize by introducing his concept of the Axial Age based on empirical facts, and not on values. Those are the same European values that guide and determine the whole process of fact-finding and interpretation³. All those who do not absorb these values inevitably find

² Nelson reduces all the characteristics enumerated by Jaspers to two main ones: rationality and individual freedom, which he also, like us, describes as permeated by the spirit of Western civilization [11. P. 479]. Despite basic agreement on the latter assessment, the reduction of all characteristics to just two seems to be some simplification of the view presented by Jaspers. Russian researcher A. V. Semushkin identifies the Axial Age with the process of human formation as a reasonable being, thereby singling out rationality as the only significant characteristic of the Axial Age [14. P. 45].

³ In this connection, it is argued that Jaspers remains entirely within the framework of the universalist approach characteristic of 19th-century history [15. P. 239]. According to the researcher, Jaspers constructs his concept on the same premises as Hegel. The only significant difference between Jaspers’ approach and the Hegelian one is that the former also includes India and China in the field of history [15. P. 238].

themselves within the framework of this concept, doomed to degradation and to flounder on the margins of history. A. Assmann has aptly pointed out this peculiarity of Jaspers' concept: "The European arrogance, clearly rejected by Jaspers, is evident in his project of evaluating all cultures and societies by the sole criterion of rationality" [16. P. 336].

Even more radical is the conclusion Jaspers reaches when he considers whether a second axis is possible. He never gives a definite answer, but his reflections on the specificity of Western Europe and science and technology as a completely new and unique development factor lead us to a particular conclusion, as Jaspers points to possible grounds for the transition to the second Axial Age. Here it is necessary to note Jaspers' true prophetic gift because what at the time of writing was only drifting in the air and seemed something from the category of scientific (and even pseudoscientific) fiction, shortly after Jaspers' death at a fantastic pace began to be implemented in life. Nowadays, in retrospect, it is not always easy even to assess the innovativeness of this work. Jaspers sees the beginnings of the new axis of age in the scientific *Weltanschauung*, which originated in Western Europe around 1500, from which it gradually spread to the entire globe [13. P. 99]. Jaspers supposes the creation of the united world space (i.e., globalization) to be the main descriptive characteristic (and simultaneously the condition for the realization of the new age axis) [13. P. 141]. Further, everything develops according to the exact blueprint as in the case of prehistoric and historical cultures during the transition to the axial age: those who can absorb the new worldview will enter the new world; those who cannot — will remain on the sidelines. The only difference is that here Jaspers proposes not three centers but only one — Europe, from where the march of the new worldview begins. The phenomena of spiritual culture structuring the new worldview are here again not three, but only one — technicized science. Although Jaspers does not operate with the concept of "the end of history," however, it is difficult to find any significant difference between his version of the "second axis" and the new division into civilizations that have and have not entered the new world, from the proposed version of Fukuyama and his division into history and posthistory.

Thus, we see that, on closer examination, Jaspers' counter-Eurocentric conception is built on the same Eurocentric premises concerning both the original motivation for its creation and the prospects for the further development of history after the supposed possible "New Axis." This leads us to some seemingly unexpected conclusions. On the one hand, Eurocentrism and the tendency to view one's European vision of reality as universal and the only correct one is a structural characteristic of the European worldview. On the other hand, the attempt to overcome Eurocentrism leads only to the creation of a new norm, still as universal and inclusive, still presented as the only correct view of things⁴. Thus, counter-

⁴ H. Heit aptly characterized this shady side of Jaspers' model as "a form of anti-Eurocentrism which can paradoxically lead to an intensified version of a rehabilitated Western universalism." [10. P. 113].

Eurocentrism is a direct offspring of the same European mentality and, as such, bears all the features characteristic of European civilization.

However, the second conclusion is inherently paradoxical since it leads to the logical conclusion that counter-Eurocentrism is a property of Eurocentrism itself. There, in turn, seems to be nothing left but to refer to an even deeper paradoxicality of Christian civilization, the secularized version of which we have been dealing with in Europe since the 18th century. The Christian value of love for enemies, declared as universal, is being transformed into tolerance to the extent of relativizing the universal significance of Christian values. At the same time, in the original ontologization of the Christian Weltanschauung, there is the basis of overcoming metaphysics, providing G. Vattimo grounds to state that Christianity itself (mainly in the commandment of *caritas*) contains the root of nihilism and self-elimination [17. P. 107—128].

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About the authors:


Kryshtop Ludmila E. — Doctor in Philosophy, Professor, Department of History of Philosophy, RUDN University, Moscow, Russia (e-mail: kryshtop-le@rudn.ru). ORCID: 0000-0002-1012-5953

Basmanov Alexey V. — Master's degree in History of Philosophy, teacher, Department of foreign languages, RUDN University, Moscow, Russia (e-mail: basmanov-av@rudn.ru). ORCID: 0000-0003-2100-9648

История, ее истоки и конец в контексте философии освобождения

Л.Э. Крыштон  , А.В. Басманов 

Российский университет дружбы народов,
Российская Федерация, Москва, 117198, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, д. 6

kryshtop-le@rudn.ru

Аннотация. Статья посвящена рассмотрению истории, ее истоков, целей и конца. В статье в центре внимания оказываются две концепции исторического развития. Одна из них — концепция «конца истории» Ф. Фукуямы. Авторы статьи подробно рассматривают основные положения данной концепции, однако основной акцент делается на критической рецепции данной концепции в рамках философии освобождения (в лице одного из ведущих ее представителей — Роига). Критика Роига позволяет вскрыть присущую данной концепции европоцентричность и показывает, что она несет в себе основные черты, присущие европейскому мировосприятию и европейской ментальности, в силу чего изначально воспринимается как неподходящая для латиноамериканского континента. Вторая анализируемая концепция исторического развития, анализируемая в данной статье — это более ранняя концепция «осевого времени» К. Ясперса. Данная концепция нередко воспринимается как одна из наиболее ярких антиевропоцентристских концепций, тогда как самого Ясперса записывают в основатели диалога культуры и интеркультурной философии и убежденные сторонники цивилизационного плюрализма. В статье последовательно анализируются три аспекта данной концепции — мотивация ее создания (представляемая самим Ясперсом в своей работе), критерии выделения исторических и доисторических культур (и связанное с этим выделение трех центров осевого времени), а также вопрос о возможности новой оси времени. В статье аргументированно показывается, что концепция Ясперса с большим правом может называться европоцентристской, нежели антиевропоцентристской, так как как в исходной мотивации создания данной концепции, так и в процессе ее развития и видении перспектив возможности новой оси времени Ясперс исходит из предпосылок, характерных для европейского мировоззрения, которые им универсализируются и представляются как объективные и единственно правильные. В конечном итоге, проведенное исследование показывает, что борьба с европоцентризмом является логичным продолжением самого европоцентризма и несет в себе все основные черты европейской ментальности.

Ключевые слова: конец истории, осевое время, постмодернизм, христианство, европоцентризм

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Сведения об авторах:

Крыштон Людмила Эдуардовна — доктор философских наук, профессор кафедры истории философии, Российский университет дружбы народов, Москва, Россия (e-mail: krysh-top-le@rudn.ru). ORCID: 0000-0002-1012-5953

Басманов Алексей Владимирович — магистр по специальности история философии, педагог дополнительного образования кафедры иностранных языков, факультет гуманитарных и социальных наук, Российский университет дружбы народов, Москва, Россия (e-mail: basmanov-av@rudn.ru). ORCID: 0000-0003-2100-9648